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In March of 1980, PAIGH authorities approved a new program calling for the production of a series of national gazetteers. The gazetteers are to be based principally on names appearing on the PAIGH map series at 1:250,000, but will also include other names in accordance with national requirements. A meeting of a Gazetteer Working Group comprised of representatives of interested countries took place in Panama during July 1981. At that meeting, discussions centered on the development of common specifications for the gazetteers. Decisions were made regarding gazetteer format and the establishment of work and

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production schedules by participating nations. This paper describes the gazetteer program in detail and reports on the current status of work.

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THE PAIGH GAZETTEER PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

This paper describes a new PAIGH program to produce a series of national gazetteers. Although the idea of national gazetteers had been discussed earlier at PAIGH Meetings, the establishment of a PAIGH topographic map series at 1:250,000 provided the necessary impetus. The maps of this series would furnish a common source of geographic names that, in turn, could form the basis of gazetteers. With the cooperation of representatives of several PAIGH member nations, plans for gazetteers are being established. The events leading to the plans and the details of the new program are covered in this paper.

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## WHAT IS A GAZETTEER?

World wide, there are several definitions of a gazetteer. In general, however, a gazetteer can be called a publication that contains information about geographical features, including their names. In some cases, this information is associated with a particular series of maps, such as those in an atlas, and are associated with the features that have names. When having this function, the collection of names is usually called an index. Other gazetteers show detailed information about places, such as the kind of feature, its function, its location, and especially where populated places or administrative units are concerned, textual description about the size, history, and principle economic or political activities. Perhaps the most common gazetteer is one that shows only a few categories of information. The name and variant names, the location by degrees and minutes of latitude and longitude, a short descriptive term that classifies the features, the source on which the name and feature appears, and perhaps one or two additional items, such as elevation and area. The most usual format is to have all names of the covered areas listed alphabetically. Other formats list names by kind of feature, such as hydrographic, orographic, populated, and administrative unit. Some gazetteers also contain text material that explains how the publication was compiled or describes various problems of orthography or linguistics. In all instances, the gazetteer finds many uses. Many places in the news cannot be found or located without a gazetteer. Historical research frequently requires gazetteers, unless of course, the time span predates existing gazetteers. Persons researching their ancestry often rely on gazetteers. There are many examples where very important information about places can be found only with the aid of a gazetteer.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMES

Too often, names are taken for granted. By that I mean to say that few people have any appreciation of the processes used to prepare information about a list of names or even a single name. Most people just accept the name as it appears on a map or in a book and let it go at that. But like our own names, geographic names can convey important messages. Personal names can indicate sex, national origin, family affiliation,

and more. Geographic names also can provide a wealth of information. But without going into further detail, suffice it to say that persons normally attach great importance to the town, State or country of birth--it may be even more important to them than their own name. "Where are you from" is one of the first questions asked when people meet for the first time.

To be sure there are maps and charts and other locational products that need no names, but where persons are involved in map usage the value of a map may be completely dependent on the names it carries. By the same token, the worth of the map is a function of the accuracy of the names. This is as true at the basic layman level as it is when maps or charts are employed for the most exacting reasons. Here, the name and its location are paramount factors in whatever processes of analysis or decisions are involved. Behind the requirement for names is the need for systematic methods of managing names. In the field where names are collected and in the office where conflicts are resolved and names are processed for publication, it is important that techniques employed are rational and efficient. No matter how striking its design and precise the geodetic information, if the names are misplaced, misspelled or inaccurate, the map will suffer. Even though cartographers are normally assigned the task of preparing names, experience proves that for truly thorough work on names, disciplines such as linguistics, geography, and even history should be involved in the treatment of names.

The importance of names on an international basis has long been recognized by the United Nations. In the early 1960's, several leading geographers and toponymists approached the UN with the request that support be provided to programs on the standardization of names. Since that time, there have been 9 meetings of a UN technical body and three major UN conferences on names. In late August and early September 1982, the fourth UN conference will take place in Geneva. Results of these meetings are impressive. More and more nations are collaborating in programs to standardize names according to common procedures. There is greater awareness that names produced by individual nations of their own territories and made widely available, can contribute

greatly to the worthy goal of improving international communications. In the process, attention has been paid to the value of national gazetteers. Happily, a growing number of countries are producing gazetteers for the benefit of the rest of the world.

## THE PAIGH GAZETTEER PROGRAM

The idea of a series of gazetteers for nations of the PAIGH community was brought up at meetings of the PAIGH Committee on Geographical Terminology. That committee, created in 1973, reviewed various projects that appeared useful, including one to prepare gazetteers according to common specifications. No appreciable progress was made, however, in this matter, although several countries already could point to various kinds of gazetteers being compiled.

It was the successful inauguration of another PAIGH program that revived the idea of a gazetteer series. With the initiation in 1978 of the PAIGH Unified Hemispheric Mapping Program at 1:250,000 on the part of several nations, the rationale for national gazetteers was highlighted. The existence of official maps almost naturally demanded accompanying lists of names featured on the maps. In March of 1980, PAIGH authorities approved a plan produced by the United States and supported by Mexico to initiate steps leading to the production of gazetteers based on names on the PAIGH maps. Money was allocated to support a meeting of a gazetteer working group which was to meet to work out common specifications and to take other action. Late in 1980, a letter was circulated by the Cartography Commission of the PAIGH to all national sections to inform them that plans were being made for a gazetteer program. That letter and another letter early in 1981 called for the formation of a working group and for a meeting of this planning body in July in Panama. Subsequently, from 27-30 July 1981, representatives from Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and the United States met at the facilities of the Cartography School of the Inter American Geodetic Survey to discuss the program and to establish specifications.

Acting as Principal Project Coordinator, the author led discussions centering on the PAIGH map program, the rationale of a PAIGH gazetteer program, the format and content of existing national gazetteers, the activities of various countries to standardize names, the role of names agencies in local cartographic processes, and the requirements to develop common specifications for gazetteers. Examples of national work on names showed that much effort was being directed toward field and office methods and



toward the application of standardized names to official cartographic products and other items. Colombia, for example, has recently completed a two-volume dictionary of geographical features in that country. The work includes description of features, maps, and photographs. The work of countries to produce the PAIGH maps series is at various stages. Mexico has plans to publish some 92 sheets in 1982 from a total of some 197 sheets. Regardless of work status, all participants agreed that a program of gazetteers was a valid activity. With the understanding that the national sections of each country would have to endorse any agreements made in Panama, and with the view that some further changes in specifications might be desirable, the participants agreed to the following major points.

1. Geographical Name. All names on the PAIGH Maps would be carried. Additional names from official sources also would be shown.
2. Designation. A single word or abbreviation would be used to categorize feature types. This "designation" would permit quick identification of the kind of feature, regardless of whether it was called a river, brook, stream, canal, tributary, or a similar term.
3. Coordinates. It was agreed that coordinates located to the nearest minute would be satisfactory. The method to locate linear features, especially rivers that flowed into another country, occupied much discussion. A final technique will be worked out through correspondence.
4. Altitude. It was generally accepted that except for certain prominent features it would not be necessary to show elevation.
5. Administrative Units. The group agreed that each name should be accompanied by the name of the administrative unit in which it is located.
6. Alphabetization. Names normally are to be listed by the first word of the specific element, followed by the generic element. (Thus, Mount Sierra would be listed as Sierra, Mount.)

Other items agreed upon included matters of content. An introduction to describe methodology and other topics would be required. There should be a glossary to define

generic terms. Any abbreviated terms used in association with names should be listed and defined. Where needed, disclaimers concerning boundaries or areas under dispute should be provided. As to design, there was agreement that there should be maximum similarity among national gazetteers. The Principal Coordinator asked that each participant circulate the specifications to his own country and to others to determine whether they could be accepted or whether modifications were required. As of November 1, only one statement concerning changes had been received. The recommended changes will be circulated among members of the Working Group for comment. Meantime, three persons agreed to act as Regional Coordinators to expedite the function of the group and to assure better local progress. Engineer Jorge Varela of Costa Rica will work with countries of Central America, Engineer Hugo Alejandro Sanchez V. of Colombia will work with Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, and Engineer Julio Ronchetti of Argentina will coordinate activities with Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina. It was agreed that when Brazil joins the PAIGH mapping program, a separate coordinator would be required. The author will continue as chief coordinator and will work with Mexico and Canada as well as the United States. Other PAIGH countries not specified above will be approached by Dr. Randall.

While agreeing to general specifications, each member of the Working Group understood that nations could depart from form to meet local requirements for place-name information. For example, a nation that already produces detailed gazetteers of medium or large-scale maps and associated names sources would not be asked to develop a new gazetteer series. Nevertheless, it is hoped that all PAIGH nations would strive to adopt the PAIGH specifications and format to the maximum possible degree.

The next step is for the Principal Project Coordinator to develop final specifications, based on additional guidance supplied by the Working Group, and propose that they be endorsed by PAIGH authorities as the basis of the PAIGH Gazetteer program. It is hoped that these steps can be carried out in the near future so final specifications can be submitted to the XII General Assembly of PAIGH in Chile in March of 1982. With that necessary action, the Working Group can then begin to implement the task of preparing gazetteers.

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